

VZCZCXRO3962
PP RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2709/01 3241441
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201441Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5296
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002709

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SUBJECT: Darfur - UN USYG Egeland Warns of Worsening Situation

REF: Khartoum 2694

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Despite the strong efforts of the non-governmental organization (NGO) community and the commitment of the donor community, the humanitarian situation in Darfur is poised to deteriorate, according to Jan Egeland, UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Egeland briefed the donor community on November 18, at the end of his trip, which was cut short by restrictions on his travel in Darfur. Egeland expressed fears over growing insecurity, a lack of civilian protection, and Sudanese government limits on the activities of humanitarian organizations. He also briefly discussed the Southern Sudan leg of his trip (reftel). Egeland characterized the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) as an impotent force that is seen by the affected populations in Darfur as a party to the conflict and not a neutral arbiter. Egeland stated the one breakthrough was the recent agreement in Addis Ababa. Charge d'Affaires (CDA) Cameron Hume, however, emphasized that the international community must keep pushing. Hume explained it is likely the Sudanese government will step back from at least part of the agreement, will be slow to implement what it agreed to, and is likely buying time to try to finish its military solution. End Summary.

Situation on the Ground

¶2. (SBU) Egeland stated that while the indicators are currently good in the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the extremely effective work of the NGOs and one of the best resourced responses by the donor community, the security situation is even worse than in September 2004, with now more than 4 million people affected. He noted that all the hard work is at risk because of rising insecurity hampering the delivery of aid, a civilian population that is almost completely without protection from attacks, and a government that continues to block the operation of NGOs. Egeland emphasized that donor support needed to increase in 2007 because the worsening security situation, with 95 percent of roads declared "no go," would require more aid to be delivered by helicopter.

¶3. (SBU) The Government of National Unity's (GNU) Humanitarian Affairs Minister Kostis Manibe told Egeland during the trip that the moratorium on NGO restrictions would be extended. However, Egeland

stated that the non-issuance of travel and work permits, non-application of the UN Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and the new NGO legislation are seriously hindering NGOs. He indicated that a third of the staff of many NGOs operating in West Darfur is stuck in Khartoum, while another third is in Darfur illegally. Egeland also cited the 25-mile restriction placed on Americans as a serious problem.

¶4. (U) Sudan's UN Humanitarian Affairs Representative, Manual da Silva, added that the NGO Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) was recently given 72 hours to turn over all its equipment, including computers and vehicles, to the Sudanese government. Da Silva requested a strong, joint demarche from the donor community on this issue.

Camps Could Become Battleground, AMIS Not Helping

¶5. (SBU) Egeland also noted that many IDP camps around El Geneina, West Darfur, were controlled by armed opposition groups, and camps throughout Darfur were simultaneously seeing more weapons on the inside and being surrounded by militia groups. However, Egeland was not able to see as many camps as he would have liked because the Sudanese government restricted him from visiting Tawila, Jebel Marra, and Kabkabiya, citing security concerns. In Kabkabiya, Egeland had planned to meet Janjaweed leader Musa Hilal.

¶6. (U) Meanwhile, Egeland stated that AMIS is completely ineffective and is seen as a party to the conflict. He said that selective enforcement of patrols and other actions have led Darfurians to question AMIS' neutrality. Egeland indicated that the AMIS force was much more effective in 2005, when it had one-half of its current forces and one-fifth of its present logistics.

¶7. (SBU) Egeland noted that the attack on Sirba, West Darfur, was particularly disturbing. The fighting took place only a few hundred

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meters from AMIS troops, but the peacekeeping forces did not go to the battle site until after the situation had calmed and then refused to stay to protect the remaining civilian population. Meanwhile, the Sudanese government indicated it was only conducting military operations against rebel fighters and not civilians, although eyewitness accounts contradicted this.

CDA: Addis Ababa Agreement Only the Beginning

¶8. (SBU) Egeland indicated that the sole bright spot on the trip was the agreement reached in Addis Ababa to bolster AMIS forces with UN support. CDA Hume underlined that the international community needs to keep pushing and not assume that anything has yet been resolved. He pointed out that President Bashir had agreed to an initial "lite" package two months ago and nothing had happened yet. Hume stated he expected the Sudanese government to back away from parts of the agreement and be extremely slow in implementing what it had agreed to do. Once the government does accept a heavier package, it will likely not be the 17,000 troops called for in UNSCR 1706, Hume explained. And even then, it will take several months to actually deploy the troops.

¶9. (SBU) Hume pointed out that over the past six months President Bashir has been determined to complete his military solution in Darfur. During that time, the Sudanese government has been frustrating all political attempts at resolving the crisis. This includes stalling efforts to organize a non-signatory commander's conference in Darfur. Hume noted that there is also evidence that Bashir has given Musa Hilal the "go ahead" to start attacking IDP camps.

HUME